



Frequently Asked Questions about Proposed Critical Habitat for *Monardella limnoides ssp. viminea* (willowy monardella)

Q. What is willowy monardella?

This native plant is a member of the mint family and is only found in portions of San Diego California, from Los Penasquitos Canyon to Mission Gorge, and in Otay Mesa. Occurrences of the plant are also known from northern Baja California, Mexico. Willowy monardella grows in groupings – referred to as clumps – along benches and washes adjacent to perennial streams.

Q. What physical and biological features are essential to the conservation of willowy monardella?

When designating critical habitat, the Service must determine – based on the best available scientific and commercial information – what physical and biological features are essential to the conservation of a species and that may require special management considerations or protection.

Habitat features that enable willowy monardella to fulfill its lifecycle needs include: (1) Ephemeral drainages with natural flooding regimes, or one sufficiently corresponding to a natural regime, with flowing water only after peak seasonal rains or major flooding events that periodically scours riparian vegetation and redistributes alluvial material; (2) coarse, rocky, sandy alluvium on terraced floodplains, benches, stabilized sandbars, channel banks, and sandy washes along and within ephemeral drainages, or among boulders, stones, and in cracks in the bedrock of ephemeral drainages; adjacent riparian and upland habitat that maintain connectivity between populations, and provide for re-colonization of areas that contain suitable habitat; and (4) semi-open canopy of coastal sage and riparian scrub with little herbaceous under-story that may contain California buckwheat, sycamore, California sagebrush, coyotebush, or in southern populations: mule fat, cane bluestem, Orcutt's brodiaea, tecate cypress, San Diego povertyweed, Leopold's rush, seep monkeyflower, deergrass, and white woolly twintip.

Q. What areas are being proposed as critical habitat?

A total of 115 acres of private land in Sycamore Canyon in the City of Santee are proposed for critical habitat designation. This area contains one of the largest occurrences of willowy monardella within the northern portion of the species' range in San Diego County.

Q. What about other occurrences of willowy monardella?

The Service is aware of 11 occurrences of willowy monardella in San Diego County. With the exception of the occurrence in Sycamore Canyon, the remaining occurrences are found on Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar (MCAS, Miramar), lands managed by the California Department of Forestry, lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), or in areas covered by approved subarea plans under the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP).

The Service is proposing to exclude from critical habitat habitat containing features essential to the conservation of willowy monardella within the boundaries of the City of San Diego and County of San Diego approved subarea plans under the MSCP. Through the implementation of these approved subarea plans, occurrences of willowy monardella are to be avoided within and outside of targeted reserve areas to the maximum extent practicable, and to be monitored and managed.

Lands on MCAS, Miramar that contain physical and biological features essential to the conservation of willow monardella are exempted from proposed critical habitat pursuant to section 4(a)(3) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) because an Integrated Natural Resource Conservation Plan has been completed which provides a benefit to the species.

The Service is proposing to exclude lands managed by the BLM in the Otay Mountain Wilderness because conservation of the plant is addressed through a Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM, the Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, the City and County of San Diego, and the San Diego Association of Governments.

Q. Why is the Service proposing critical habitat for willow monardella?

At the time the Service listed willow monardella as endangered under the ESA, we determined that designation of critical habitat was not prudent.

A lawsuit was filed against the Service by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) in 2001, challenging our “not prudent” determination. On June 2, 2003, the Service and CNPS signed a stipulated settlement agreement whereby, the Service agreed to reconsider the not prudent finding and, if critical habitat is prudent, a proposed rule would be completed on or before October 30, 2005. This proposed rule complies with the terms of the settlement agreement.

Q. Is an economic analysis available for this proposal?

Not yet. The Service will prepare a draft economic analysis for this critical habitat proposal and will release it for public review and comment at a later date. A notice announcing the availability of the draft analysis will be published in the Federal Register and the Service will notify interested parties about its availability, including posting the draft analysis on its website at <http://carlsbad.fws.gov>.

Q. How can the public comment on the proposed critical habitat designation for willow monardella?

Comments on the proposed critical habitat designation can be submitted to the Service by one of several methods. Written comments and information can be sent to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92011. Comments and information may also be sent by facsimile to 760-431-9624.

You may also submit information and comments by electronic mail to fw8cfwomolivi@fws.gov. If you are submitting comments electronically, please avoid the use of special characters and encryption. Please include your name and address in the body of your message and include “Attn: willow monardella” in the subject line of your electronic message.

The Service will accept comments and information on the proposed rule until January 9, 2006.

Requests for a public hearing on the proposed critical habitat designation must be submitted in writing on or before December 27, 2005.

Q. Where can I learn more about willow monardella?

Copies of the proposed rule and other information are available on the Internet at <http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

You can also find more information about the listing of willow monardella under the ESA by visiting the Service’s website at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/wildlife.html> and typing in ‘willow monardella’.